

El Saucito

[written 1990 by The Nature Conservancy]

In the late 1860s Chester Brumley recognized a willow thicket *in* the hills above the Carrizo Plain as a good place to build a home and raise some cows. As the employee of the Miller and Lux Cattle Company responsible for establishing a cow camp, Brumley was attracted to the ample water, livestock forage, cooling summer breezes and expansive view of the plain that the site offered. It was here, in 1870, that Brumley built the first permanent home on the Carrizo Plain, naming it for the willows. This ranch known as "El Saucito", remains a well-watered and shady retreat even though it hasn't been occupied for several years and is in need of extensive repair.

The Brumley family lived in a one-room adobe on the Painted Rock Ranch, which Brumley managed, until El Saucito was completed. Nellie Brumley Lattimer claimed that the materials for the house were shipped around the Horn from the family's home state New York and then hauled from San Luis Obispo by eight-horse teams for three cents a pound.

For twenty years, the Saucito remained the only permanent home on the Carrizo Plain. The only public road was fourteen miles away and the family's nearest neighbor was twenty five miles away on the La Panza Ranch. Nellie Brumley Lattimer told of riding to the La Panza Ranch three times a week to pick up the family's mail. Tiring of the ride, the family established the Saucito as the Carrizo's first official post office in 1882. Nellie remembered that Indians passing through the Carrizo would often stop at the family's home to have a drink from the well, rest in the shade and enjoy a cookie or two.

Seeking to moderate the hot and dry environment of the Carrizo Plain, the Brumley's cultivated a wide variety of plants around their home. The cottonwoods that still shade the Saucito today were planted at the time the house was constructed. By 1882 the family had successfully established a garden-spot on the Carrizo according to a description offered by newspaperman and promoter Myron Angel:

"This gentleman and his accomplished family have made here a little oasis *in* this broad, treeless and desolate plain. A comfortable two-story house surrounded by a broad, vine-clad veranda amid a little grove of fruit, eucalyptus and cottonwood trees presents a pleasing contrast to the usual style of buildings through the pastoral regions."

Six years later Angel was becoming increasingly excited about Brumley's agricultural experiments on the Carrizo reporting that:

"Mr . Brumley has grown grapes, figs, pears, apples and other varieties of fruits and berries his grapes are very large and very sweet and make large and luscious raisins . The other fruits were o f the very best quality and some of the figs brought to San Luis were thought the best ever eaten by those whose fortune it was to get them. Apples and pears bore so heavily as to break down the trees. "

Chester R. Brumley was killed in 1888 while breaking a horse. Following this tragedy his son, Chester Jerome Brumley, assumed management of the ranch until its sale in 1895 . Between that date and the present the property has passed through many hands including the Garcias, Edgars

(whose name archaeologists have attached to the rock paintings nearby) and Bingemans many of whom are still alive and feel a great fondness for the home. Although changes have been made through the years, such as the addition of the nursery, and the house has deteriorated from recent lack of use, it remains much as it was when the Brumley's lived there.